

prolonged financial stress in the farm sector has required the Congress to repeatedly step in on an ad hoc basis to supplement farm bill assistance. To respond to the needs of producers suffering from continuing low crop prices and inadequate farm bill assistance, and to provide a sensible approach for the reauthorization of the farm bill in 2002, I proposed counter-cyclical farm income assistance in my FY 2001 Budget, which would provide higher payments on those crops with the most depressed prices and revenues. I am disappointed that the Congress did not adopt this proposal, and instead chose again simply to double the AMTA payments without regard to the hardships facing individual producers this year. Payments in this bill will be based on what producers grew prior to 1996, not what they are growing now, and some payment recipients may not even be growing covered crops anymore, having switched to other commodities or livestock production. We need to move beyond this kind of untargeted, patchwork fix to secure a stronger, more reliable farm safety net that provides dependable assistance to family farmers based on their current farm income.

Another crucial component of my farm safety net proposal is to significantly increase funds for conservation programs, such as the Conservation and Wetlands Reserve Programs, and a new Conservation Security Program. These programs can boost farm income to a wide range of producers, while providing environmental benefits for all Americans. I am disappointed that virtually no funds were included for these programs, and I will continue to seek substantially increased funding for them this year. Additionally, we want to work with the Congress to prevent an unintended sequester.

This bill's farm income assistance will help many producers get through what is shaping up to be another tough year, and the crop insurance reforms should enhance producers' ability to survive natural disasters for years to come. But I would hope that the experience of the last 3 years has taught those who shape farm policy on Capitol Hill—as farm families across the country have learned first-hand the hard way—that we need to build a stronger, better farm safety net on

which American producers, their families, and communities can depend.

William J. Clinton

The White House,
June 20, 2000.

NOTE: H.R. 2559, approved June 20, was assigned Public Law No. 106-224.

Statement on European Security and Defense Policy

June 20, 2000

I welcome the progress the European Union made at the Feira Summit to develop a common European security and defense policy. It will strengthen Europe's ability—and responsibility—to act in times of crisis. It will improve cooperation between the European Union and NATO. It will advance European unity while maintaining the vitality of the transatlantic alliance. I look forward to early implementation of the agreed steps, including the establishment of NATO-EU working groups and regular meetings with non-EU allies.

I also welcome the EU's commitment to create a standing roster of police officers who can be deployed to support peacekeeping missions. As we have seen in Bosnia and Kosovo, there is a critical need for international civilian police who can fill the gap between local police and military peacekeepers in countries emerging from conflict. We will continue to work with Europe to ensure such forces can deploy rapidly when they are needed.

Statement on Senate Action on Hate Crimes Legislation

June 20, 2000

Today the Senate held a historic and long-overdue vote on hate crimes legislation. I applaud the Senate for passing this crucial measure, and recognize the efforts of Senator Kennedy on this important issue. This amendment recognizes that hate crimes are different from other crimes. When Americans are targeted just because of who they